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### **My Philosophy of Ministry**

When I began my journey to write out my philosophy of ministry, it very quickly became a surgical attempt to articulate beliefs in a clear and concise manner. However, God touched my life with two very different and very sudden deaths within the past few days, calling my attention to the understanding that my philosophy of ministry, while it can and must be clear, must also never be surgical. My philosophy of ministry must intertwine with all aspects of my lived being so that, in some ways, it actually becomes quite messy as it is lived out. By “messy,” I simply mean that while living out my philosophy passionately there will be times when there is intense confusion in my soul alongside times of intense lack of understanding which will guide me further into intense trust. These “messy” times highlight the necessity of having clearly articulated values so that I can “fall back” on what I believe when the world around me is in confusion. If I am to follow Christ passionately, if I am to surrender and live utterly at the throne of God, if I am to serve out of the power of the Holy Spirit, I will have a soul that hurts and rejoices and is deeply connected with what God cares for most: people.

### **My Theological Foundation for Ministry**

As a young child, God gave me Ephesians 6:12 as my life verse. Over the years and in many contexts, He has reminded me of its importance and renewed my drive for reaching others by bringing its words back into focus in a myriad of ways. I was blessed to come to know Christ, to be empowered by the Holy Spirit, and to be called of God to serve Him at a very young age. I was gifted with eyes to see souls marching to hell simply because they knew no other way and I was reminded that I was not battling with those souls, but with the forces that were seeking to

keep them in permanent states of unending torture. I was given compassion to love those who attacked me and wisdom to know that what they were attacking was Christ in me, whom they could not harm. My heart breaks over lost souls. I am in the battle because my Savior has commissioned me to be in the battle, so I will continue to press on by His sustaining power (Philippians 3:13-14).

### **My Primary Calling Mission Statement**

My mission is to live obediently, stepping out to boldly love others, while firmly rooted in the knowledge that I am in a spiritual battle which seeks to claim souls.

### **My Statement of Faith**

- I believe in God, maker of heaven and earth, who is infinitely perfect. He exists eternally in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.<sup>1</sup> All three persons were present and participatory in Creation when humanity was made in the image of God and given the mandate to care for Creation.<sup>2</sup>
- By their own willful disobedience, the first humans incurred physical and spiritual death which separated them from God and placed them in a sinful state that required redemption.<sup>3</sup> This sinful condition has been passed down to each person in every generation since and can be rectified only through the atoning work of Jesus Christ.<sup>4</sup>
- Jesus Christ, begotten not made,<sup>5</sup> truly God and truly man,<sup>6</sup> in willful obedience,<sup>7</sup> was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary,<sup>8</sup> died on the cross as a

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 5:48; 28:19.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 1:1-2, 26-28; John 1:1-4.

<sup>3</sup> Romans 3:23.

<sup>4</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

<sup>5</sup> John 1:14.

<sup>6</sup> Philippians 2:6-11.

<sup>7</sup> Luke 22:42.

<sup>8</sup> Luke 1:34-38.

substitutionary sacrifice,<sup>9</sup> rose from the dead, and ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of His Father as the great High Priest.<sup>10</sup> He will return to establish His Kingdom of righteousness and peace.<sup>11</sup>

- The Holy Spirit is a divine person<sup>12</sup> who has been sent by God the Father and God the Son<sup>13</sup> to indwell believers, guiding, teaching, and empowering them.<sup>14</sup> He is to convict those who do not yet believe so that they may be led to believe.<sup>15</sup>
- Whosoever chooses to repent from sin and turns to believe in Christ is indwelled by the Holy Spirit, receives the gift of eternal life, and becomes a child of God.<sup>16</sup>
- The Holy Spirit sanctifies believers, setting them apart from sin, and dedicating them to God, imparting to them the power necessary to holy living and effective service.<sup>17</sup> This is both a crisis and a progressive experience in the life of a believer.<sup>18</sup>
- The redemptive work of Christ and the believer's participation in it provides believers with full restoration, thereby quickening them with the life of Christ who has borne all their physical and spiritual pain; this allows for both physical and spiritual healing.<sup>19</sup> Prayer for the sick as taught in scripture, remains a privilege for the Church today.<sup>20</sup>
- The Old and New Testaments were verbally inspired by God, are inerrant as originally given, and are the complete revelation of God's will for the salvation of humanity; they constitute the divine and only rule of Christian faith and practice.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Hebrews 2:9; 9:12; 1 Peter 3:18.

<sup>10</sup> Hebrews 4:14; 12:12.

<sup>11</sup> Matthew 26:64.

<sup>12</sup> John 14:15-18.

<sup>13</sup> John 14:16; 16:7.

<sup>14</sup> John 16:13; Acts 1:8.

<sup>15</sup> John 16:7-11.

<sup>16</sup> John 3:16; Titus 3:4-7.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Acts 1:8.

<sup>18</sup> Romans 6:1-14.

<sup>19</sup> Isaiah 53:3-5; Romans 6:1-14.

<sup>20</sup> James 5:13-16.

<sup>21</sup> 2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:15-16.

- The Church consists of all those who have repented of sin and turned to Christ for salvation.<sup>22</sup> The Church has been given the Holy Spirit and commissioned to go into the world to make disciples who make disciples.<sup>23</sup>
- The local church is a body of Christ-followers who have been joined together by God to worship, to be edified by the Word of God, to pray, to fellowship, to proclaim the gospel, and to observe together the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.<sup>24</sup>
- Each participant in a local church has, through the power of the Holy Spirit, been gifted in a special way to serve both believers and non-believers as they grow into the likeness of Christ in community together.<sup>25</sup>
- When the Church has preached the gospel to the ends of the earth,<sup>26</sup> then Christ shall visibly come again to judge the living and the dead.<sup>27</sup> There will be a bodily resurrection for all; the unjust will be sentenced to eternal damnation and the just to eternity with Christ.<sup>28</sup>

### **My Ministry Values**

Moving from one ministry to another has caused me to reflect on just what it is that is most important to me. I have discovered that, very often, what is done on the surface, not superficially but the end result of decisions (i.e. song selection for worship), may not exactly be my preference, but, if I can take the time to see what is underneath that decision, if I can take the time to see the values that are upheld in the process which led to an outcome that is in line with those values even if the outcome is not my preference, then I can more fully get behind the

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<sup>22</sup> Ephesians 1:22-23.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 28:18-20.

<sup>24</sup> Acts 2:21-47.

<sup>25</sup> Romans 12:4-8; 1 Corinthians 12.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 24:14.

<sup>27</sup> Luke 21:27-28.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 25:40-46; John 5:28-29; 1 Corinthians 15:20-23.

ministries of the church because I can support the values on which they were built. To that end, I have narrowed down my values to six areas which serve as a basis for my evaluation, reflection, and decision making. These include spiritual growth, people, worship, honesty, stories, and lack of partitions.

### ***I Value Spiritual Growth.***

It is not possible to serve God apart from knowing the heart of God. It is not possible to know the heart of God without dwelling in His presence (John 15:1-11). It is far too easy to think we know what God wants without taking the time to ask Him. We read His Word and we listen to others, but we put our own “bent” into what we are reading and hearing instead of simply dwelling in God’s presence, instead of allowing the Holy Spirit to guide us into meditation on what God is saying. We become stubborn and demanding, standing behind what we believe as the only correct answer. We move into the *actions* of ministry and bypass the *reason* for ministry. It is not possible for me to complete wholistic actions that are in line with the desires of God’s heart if I am not increasingly learning to dwell with Him and to listen to His voice as my guide in all times and all places (Isaiah 50:4-5).

### ***I Value People***

What a beautiful “thing” people are: created in the image of God, broken, redeemed, and gifted to serve. All people are worthy of being celebrated. All people have contributions to make to the Kingdom of God. Diversity of culture, age, gender, giftedness, economics, etc., all combine to give a fuller picture of the image of God and to sharpen each of us as we grow together waiting for Christ to return (Proverbs 27:17; 1 Corinthians 12). All people are equal in the eyes of God and have been gifted according to the same Holy Spirit to serve where God has called each of them to serve (Galatians 3:23). When we stand in the way of people being fully

released to use their gifts, we attempt to defy God's call on their lives. In other words, by blocking others, we stand in direct disobedience to the Father who has called each of us in the way in which *He* has chosen.

### ***I Value Worship***

In Isaiah 1, God makes it clear that He is tired of His people bringing Him empty offerings and thinking they can enter into His presence. These offerings are empty because the people are not caring for those around them. These offerings are empty because they involve rote actions that focus on the activities as the way of salvation; this inhibits the people from understanding that coming to worship God means dwelling in His presence. God has invited His people to be with Him, but they are so focused on the "doing" that they do not have space for the "being." Without the "being," it is not possible to know God's heart. God's heart is for His people to care for others as He cares for them. Worship today is often filled with empty actions. We fail to care for our neighbors wholistically, yet we somehow think that we can pour our hearts out in worship. Worshipping without wholistically valuing people is impossible. A heart that is truly worshipping God loves and obeys Him, which necessitates rescuing souls that are stumbling their way towards hell because that is what God has commissioned us to do (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 12:32-34).

### ***I Value Honesty***

We all make mistakes. We all do things that we do not want others to know about. We all have things in our past that affect us today, and, often, which we cannot move through without help. We all have something which we are frightened of doing and we all have areas in which we need support in order to move into new areas of growth. This is normal. This is okay. It is okay to say, "I need help." I would much rather have people tell me that they are not comfortable with

something than give me excuses for why they “cannot.” Often, those “cannots” come as a result of being asked to share our testimonies, our lives, with others because we think this is an insurmountable task of which we are not worthy. Honesty in our walks and in our concerns helps us to recognize that God loves us where we are at and to aid one another in spiritual growth.

### ***I Value Stories***

There is an incredible metanarrative which we are given in the form of God’s Word. When we choose to respond to God’s call to join Him, our stories become a part of that metanarrative and we are responsible to proclaim how that metanarrative interacts with our lives. Many people are so nervous about sharing their testimonies that they back off at the first sound of the intimidating word, “evangelization.” When we can teach people to see how their stories interact with God’s Story, how their stories are a part of God’s Story, and how God has given them stories so that they may share those stories with others and, thus, help guide people to Him, then the word, “evangelization,” loses its harsh bite and becomes, instead and as it should be, life lived together so that God’s light pours out on all those whom we encounter (Matthew 5:16; Luke 8:1-18).

### ***I Value Lack of Partitions***

It is easy to slip into a division between the secular and the sacred, when, in reality, no such division exists. Ministry is life, and life is ministry. The two flow together into one. While there is a need to guard time spent in doing ministry *tasks* (i.e., phonecalls, events), I cannot set ministry, I cannot set interaction with others in a life-giving way down at any time, for to do so would be to deny my call to be light (Luke 8:16).

### ***My Ministry Non-Negotiables***

In seeking a place of ministry, it is necessary to go in with eyes wide open. Not all churches hold to the same values. Not all people read the Word of God in the same way. While there is no church, or place of ministry, that will fit into all of one's specific views, it is necessary to determine what those views or beliefs are on which one cannot compromise. I am willing to work in conditions that are not exactly in line with my perspective, however, there are a few points to which I must adhere. Those include the sanctity of all life, participating in true worship, loving others wholly, allowing people to be full participants in the body, and equipping the saints to do ministry.

### ***Sanctity of All Life***

All life is precious because all people are made in the image of God, therefore, the sanctity of all life must be upheld. Scripture clearly stipulates that God made humankind in His image (Genesis 1:26-27). Scripture is also clear regarding the need to care for others (Isaiah 1:16-18; Mark 12:28-31). While it is absolutely necessary that we care for people in physical ways, as Christians we have more to offer; we have the chance to extend the message of salvation to eternal souls. When we meet physical needs without meeting spiritual needs, we participate in condemning people to death. And it is impossible to meet spiritual needs without meeting physical needs for two reasons: (1) In the hierarchy of needs, people need full bellies before they can begin to listen, and (2) God commands the meeting of physical needs, so to do any less is pure disobedience.

### ***True Worship***

Disobedience in caring for others prohibits believers from participating in true worship. How can one say one loves God yet refrain from participating in what He has asked believers to do? It is not possible to love God and to disobey God (John 14:15-31). Because God desires for

all people to dwell in His presence, to grow in relationship with Him, true worship cannot happen when standing in disobedience, when standing in sin. This sin sets up a barrier which Christ can remove, but not when we continue to neglect the bodies and souls of those around us. When we are more focused on participating in actions than we are on listening to the hearts of those around us, we cannot fully come into God's presence because we are not fully willing to obey (Isaiah 1).

### ***Loving Others Wholly***

Loving God necessitates obedience; obedience to God requires loving others justly so that they too can be taught to love God and to participate in His mission in the world (Matthew 28:18-20; 1 John 4:7-8). Souls are marching to hell, yet we are more concerned about doing things "just right," about how we look to others, than we are about actually getting our hands dirty and being Christ to souls in anguish. A friend recently told me that she will not go to church because she has so many Christians around her who participate in a cult in Sunday mornings, say they love other people, but then try to force those people to behave according to certain codes of conduct that have nothing to do with being a Christ-follower; they are only concerned with outward actions. Loving others means embracing people where they are at, inviting them in as they are, and intentionally creating space for the Holy Spirit to change lives into what God wants, not what we think is proper.

### ***Full Participation of the Body in the Body***

All people have been extended the opportunity to be fully redeemed by Christ, fully equipped by the Holy Spirit, and fully commissioned by God to serve Him and others through those gifts (Acts 1:8, 1 Corinthians 12; Galatians 3:23-29). When we deny those rights, not only do we stand in disobedience to God, but we also deny ourselves, we deny the church, the ability

to be all that it is designed to be, all while effectively communicating to people that they are not worthy. Who wants to be in a place where they are not welcome? People are leaving, or not coming in the first place, with the idea that it is God who will not allow them to be full participants, when, in reality, it is our fallible churches that are placing glass ceilings on people who do not fit in quite right. Souls are being damaged!

### ***Equipping the Saints***

It is the task of ministry leaders to equip the saints (Ephesians 4:11-16). Far too often, those in church leadership keep plodding along, despairing over the lack of participation from the body, while simultaneously failing to make space for the members of the body to use their gifts. Every child of God has a gift which must be used in order for the body to function properly (1 Corinthians 12). Use of those gifts is necessary for the members of the body to grow spiritually. Impeding gifts by failing to teach people how to use them, impedes spiritual growth which impedes life individually, corporately, and missionally. The old adage that “many hands make light work” should become, in the church, “many hands reach many lost souls,” because the equipping of saints for participation in the work of ministry is not simply about the completion of physical everyday tasks, but about the reality of the eternity of souls.

### **Conclusion**

Because God does not call us to put up partitions in our lives which separate the “sacred” from the “secular,” ministry cannot be separated from life. It will be full of joy and it will be full of pain. It will be full of questions to which answers may never come. It will be messy because it involves loving people, but it is in those messy spaces, the spaces that actually call on me to live out my ministry values, that tremendous spiritual growth will occur in my life and can occur in the lives of those around me. I cannot control the spiritual growth of others. What I can control is

my reaction to Christ's call on my life to intentionally reach out to lost souls and invite people to grow in the way in which God has designed them to grow, into the giftings which He has carefully bestowed on them. My failing comes not in the failing of another person to obey Christ, but in my lack of participation in the tasks which I have been given. Not everyone will choose Christ, but I must not fail in my choosing of Him lest I bring souls down with me (Matthew 18:6; Luke 12:48).